

MAY

Stanley Potts is sceptical about some new closing clamps recommended by Toby, who's getting on rather well with a client

06 FRIDAY

Peter K__ phoned and asked if Toby was in today. I told him that he only works Wednesdays and Thursdays, so he said he'd call in next week. I wonder what that was all about?

Just got the latest *Strad* magazine – yet another poster of an Italian violin!! I do wonder if the staff realise that there were actually some very competent makers working in countries other than Italy. You'd think a BRITISH magazine might be a bit more patriotic and feature one or two of our own fine makers – Betts, Lott, Banks... even George Pyne.

11 WEDNESDAY

Toby's been going on about some fancy closing clamps that he used in another workshop – made of some wonderful space-age material and designed to fit the curves of the violin. Probably hugely expensive. Apparently they are even colour-coded so that you always know exactly where the clamps should go. Wonderful... so now any idiot can be a violin repairer! I kept telling him that I wasn't interested.

Peter K__ came in. He and Toby spent half an hour nattering away about his set-up and discussing the possible effects of tuning the bridge. They seem to be getting on very well together. Toby thinned the bridge slightly and opened out the heart, and they were both very excited with the result (it sounded exactly the same to me!).

12 THURSDAY

Had to glue on a couple of fingerboards today. I must admit, it really is VERY useful having another pair of hands in the workshop for that particular job.

Toby borrowed some of those closing clamps he's been talking about. He left them here for me to try.

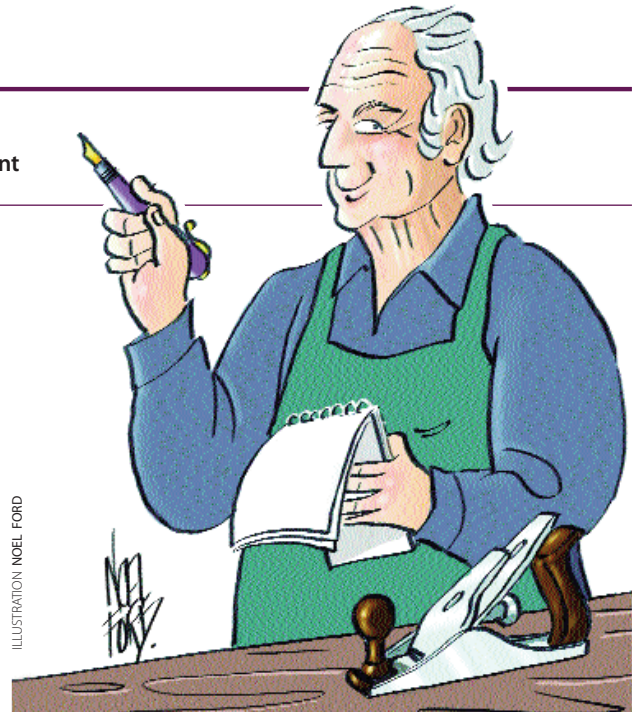
13 FRIDAY

I had an open seam to glue up on a violin today, so thought I'd better try using Toby's clamps, just to keep him quiet. They seem to work quite well.

Our wedding anniversary tomorrow. I suppose I should take Rose out for dinner. Can't afford anything too posh, though – finances have been very tight these last few months. Sometimes I think there must be an easier way to make a living! Perhaps I should write a book... that's where all the money is in violin making these days. It doesn't have to contain any useful information – as long as it's expensively bound and published in a hand-numbered, limited edition, everyone will want to buy it.

14 SATURDAY

Had some more gluing jobs to do, so used Toby's clamps again. They really are quite well designed. The pressure is in just the right place and it's very easy to clean up the excess glue.



Toby thinned the bridge slightly and opened the heart, and they were both very excited with the result (it sounded exactly the same to me!)

Herman Z__ phoned about his repair job. He's getting very impatient. He actually mentioned that if I didn't get on with it he might have to take it to Jenkins (ridiculous idea... Jenkins would make a complete hash of it!). Still, perhaps I'd better try and get started on it.

MONDAY

Used Toby's clamps twice today.

17 TUESDAY

This afternoon a chap came in with a violin for appraisal (the usual 'valuable family heirloom' story). It's interesting... I've been in this business for more than 40 years, but I still haven't lost that sense of anticipation and excitement that comes with opening the case of an unknown fiddle for the first time. Unfortunately, before I got to see this instrument, the owner spent ten minutes telling me about his long career as a French polisher and how he'd 'done a bit of work on it'. Now there's a phrase that's guaranteed to kill off any feelings of anticipation!

I suppose his French-polishing skills might have been quite good. He certainly did a very thorough job of sanding down the violin first – but he left three or four ugly black cracks that are now buried under a thick layer of shellac. Looks like it might have been a nice fiddle once. Hard to tell really – it's just a shiny blob now.

Ordered a full set of those coloured closing clamps for the workshop.

To find out more about Stanley Potts and his world, visit stanleypotts.co.uk